

7 MYTHS ABOUT VIETNAM WAR

Excerpts from "Seven Myths about Vietnam War" by John Birch Society

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1 The United States was defeated militarily in Southeast Asia. This, one of the most persistent and widely believed falsehoods, is refuted by overwhelming evidence and unimpeachable authorities. Virtually all military experts agree that America was never militarily defeated in Vietnam; we "lost" the war because of unconscionable political decisions that tied the hands of our fighting forces and *prevented* them from winning. General Curtis LeMay, a pioneer in the use of strategic bombing during World War II and chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force from 1961 until his retirement in 1965, said in 1968: "The only reason American soldiers are bleeding and dying in Vietnam today is because our leaders have tied their hands behind their backs. The only reason we haven't had victory in Vietnam is because our leaders have done everything possible to avoid it."ⁱ

2 The impact of the Pentagon's Rules of Engagement on our military capabilities in Vietnam has been greatly exaggerated. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the deleterious impact that the politically imposed Rules of Engagement (ROE) exerted, both on the actual military performance and on the morale of our forces. In fact, the political powers that be - in both Democrat and Republican administrations - understood well that the restrictions imposed on our forces were so clearly unreasonable and immoral that the American public would be totally outraged if they found out about them. So the rules were classified, and our troops and commanders were ordered not to mention them. It was 1985, ten years after the Communist takeover of Vietnam, before Senator Barry Goldwater succeeded in obtaining their declassification. The Rules of Engagement consumed 26 pages of the *Congressional Record* (March 6, 14, and 18, 1985).

3 The North Vietnamese (Communists) won, ultimately, because they occupied the moral high ground. They were fighting for their homeland against a foreign invader. There was no triumph for the Vietnamese "people" in the U.S. abandonment of Vietnam. A dark shadow of death soon descended on Southeast Asia and Communist auto-genocide (or "democide," to use the term coined by Professor R.J. Rummel) wiped out millions of lives in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and caused recurring floods of refugees not seen since the times of the Mongol invasions.

4 The Vietnamese who fought against us were more nationalists than Communists. However, the Communists were willing to help them free their country from the French - and later, American - invaders. Nguyen Huu Tho, the founder of the National Liberation Front (the Vietcong's political arm), was presented to Americans for many years as a liberal attorney, a "nationalist," without any connections to Hanoi or Communism.ⁱⁱ The NLF, however, was connected to Hanoi all the while, as if by an umbilical cord. Emboldened by the phased U.S. withdrawal, Tho and the NLF began wearing their Red colors more openly.

5 Claims by conservatives and the military that media coverage of the Vietnam War was unbalanced, hostile toward the military, or even anti-patriotic and subversive are not substantiated by the facts. Many scholarly studies have shown that the media coverage, on the whole, was fair and accurate. We are familiar with some of these studies, which are invariably whitewashes written by fellow leftists, or by even the very reporters who did the malicious and

damaging coverage during the war. A few of the leftist media denizens of the Vietnam War era have come clean, admitting what is obvious to any objective observer, that they engaged in propaganda and subversion disguised as news. One of the most refreshing and candid confessions came from Jean Lacouture, ultra-leftist reporter for the major French paper *Le Monde*, who admitted that he was ashamed "for having contributed to the installation of one of the most repressive regimes history has ever known." Lacouture, whose articles on Vietnam appeared in many major U.S. papers and magazines, said that he and other reporters on Vietnam had operated as "intermediaries for a lying and criminal propaganda - ingenuous spokesmen for tyranny in the name of liberty." "During the war," he said, "I conducted myself as a militant, sympathetic to their cause and concealed the Stalinist aspect of their system, of which I was well aware."ⁱⁱⁱ

6 It was America's pathological anti-Communist obsession that caused our leaders to get us involved in the Vietnam quagmire. American political leaders did indeed repeatedly cite the threat of Communism and use anti-Communist rhetoric, first, to get us involved militarily in Vietnam and, later, as an excuse massively to expand our involvement there. However, these same leaders, both Democrat and Republican, had done the same thing in Korea and elsewhere with no intention whatsoever of genuinely opposing Communism. In fact, while allegedly fighting the Communists in Vietnam, the internationalists in the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations continually supported policies that favored Communist takeovers and expansion in virtually every area of the world. At the same time, they guaranteed that all of our efforts in Vietnam would be futile. It was a continuation of the brutal Yalta betrayal whereby Alger Hiss and other subversives in the Roosevelt administration handed China and Eastern Europe to Stalin.

7 All of America's POWs were returned following the 1973 peace agreement, and Vietnam is now cooperating to find the remains of all the unresolved MIAs. President Clinton announced on February 3, 1994 that he was lifting the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam, which had then been in effect for 19 years. He was "absolutely convinced," he said, that renewing economic relations with Vietnam is the best way to resolve the fates of the 2,238 U.S. servicemen still listed as missing in that war.^{iv} Seventy former U.S. POWs from the Vietnam War - including Representative Sam Johnson of Texas; Admiral James Stockdale, USN (Ret.); Brigadier General Robinson Risner, USAF (Ret.); and Captain Eugene "Red" McDaniel, USN (Ret.) - sent a letter to the president expressing their strong opposition to lifting the trade embargo against Hanoi. These former POWs urged Clinton "in the strongest possible terms, not to take further steps to restore economic or diplomatic relations with Hanoi until you certify that the Communist government there is fully forthcoming in telling us what they know about our fellow POWs and MIAs who did not make it home with us in 1973."^v

ⁱ General Curtis LeMay, as quoted in "Worth Repeating," THE NEW AMERICAN, May 29, 1995, p. 34.

ⁱⁱ Hilaire du Berrier, *Background to Betrayal: The Tragedy of Vietnam* (Boston: Western Islands, 1965) p. 249; du Berrier's book remains the single-most authoritative source on the labyrinthine intrigues and political developments in Vietnam from the end of World War II to 1965. See also du Berrier's important articles, "The Diem Myth," American Opinion, October 1963 (available on our Vietnam web site, http://web.archive.org/web/20030421211937/http://www.jbs.org/visitor/focus/vietnam/misc/diem_myth.htm); "About South Vietnam," American Opinion, February 1958 (http://web.archive.org/web/20030421211937/http://www.jbs.org/visitor/focus/vietnam/misc/about_svietnam.htm); "One of the Ugliest Ugly Americans," THE NEW AMERICAN, July 14, 1986 (http://web.archive.org/web/20030421211937/http://www.jbs.org/visitor/focus/vietnam/misc/ugliest_american.htm).

ⁱⁱⁱ Stormer, p. 241.

^{iv} William F. Jasper, "Clinton Sells Out on POW/MIAs," THE NEW AMERICAN March 7, 1994, p. 17.

^v "Former POWs Oppose Viet Embargo Sellout," THE NEW AMERICAN March 7, 1994, p. 19.